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SOCIAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: HUMAN RIGHTS

Letter dated 15 April 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 15 April 1998, addressed to you by His Excellency Mr. Aytuğ Plümer, Representative of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (see annex).

I should be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Economic and Social Council, under item 14 (g) of the provisional agenda.

(Signed) Hüseyin E. ÇELEM
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* E/1998/100.

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Annex

LETTER DATED 15 APRIL 1998 FROM MR. AYTUĞ PLÜMER TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to refer to the statement made by the Greek Cypriot representative at the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva on 31 March 1998, under agenda item 18, in which unfounded allegations were levelled against my country, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, and Turkey.

The Greek Cypriot representative has alleged that Turkey "invaded" Cyprus and that "the Turkish invasion did not end in 1974". Legal and historical facts clearly indicate otherwise. The Turkish intervention of 1974 came in the aftermath of a bloody coup d'état by Greece and its collaborators in Cyprus aimed at annexing the island of Cyprus. During the preceding 11 years between 1963 and 1974, the Turkish Cypriots struggled to protect their lives and fundamental rights in the face of constant terror and oppression perpetrated by Greek Cypriots. Hundreds of Turkish Cypriots fell victim to Greek Cypriot atrocities, while villages throughout the island were attacked and devastated, rendering one fourth of the Turkish Cypriot population homeless refugees. The following paragraphs from a periodic report of the Secretary-General attest to the extent of the destruction of life and property perpetrated by the Greek Cypriots:

> "180. UNFICYP carried out a detailed survey of all damage to properties throughout the island during the disturbances ... It shows that in 109 villages, most of them Turkish Cypriot or mixed villages, 527 houses have been destroyed while 2000 others have suffered damage from looting."
>
> "190. In addition to losses incurred in agriculture and in industry during the first part of the year, the Turkish community had lost other sources of its income ... The trade of the Turkish community had considerably declined during the period, due to the existing situation, and unemployment reached a very high level as approximately 25,000 Turkish Cypriots had become refugees." (S/5950, 10 September 1964)

The Turkish Cypriot people were saved from an impending massacre by the timely and legitimate intervention of Turkey, in exercise of its rights and obligations under the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee.

At present, the only "invasion" and "occupation" in Cyprus is the continuing illegal occupation of the seat of government by the Greek Cypriot administration in violation of international treaties and the rule of law.

Against the background of unprecedented cruelty and violence, the Greek Cypriot administration continues to employ an extensive inhuman embargo with a view to preventing the exercise by the Turkish Cypriots of their human rights and isolating Northern Cyprus from the international community.

The allegations put forward by the Greek Cypriot delegate regarding the "destruction and desecration" of cultural heritage in Northern Cyprus are totally unfounded. The Greek Cypriot side has launched an extensive smear campaign, based on false and misleading data, with a view to projecting a distorted image of Northern Cyprus. These allegations have been refuted in toto by impartial observers and experts who have visited the island on different occasions. On the other hand, Ottoman Turkish architecture in South Cyprus is under threat of disintegration due to the Greek Cypriot side's utter contempt for and failure at protecting these sites. In recent years, Greek Cypriot bias and enmity towards Turkish Cypriots have frequently led to attacks on relics belonging to the Islamic heritage, leaving behind damaged, burnt and desecrated mosques in South Cyprus.

The Greek Cypriot representative has also made false complaints about the living conditions of Greek Cypriots in Northern Cyprus. The living standards of Greek Cypriots as well as Maronites are on a par with those of Turkish Cypriots in the area. Contrary to the Greek Cypriot representative's allegation, there is no limitation on the number of persons visiting a place of worship in Northern Cyprus, subject to the procedures for entry currently in force.

The dire living conditions of the Turkish Cypriots residing in the South, however, are in stark contrast with the prevailing normal situation in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The following excerpt taken from the human rights report of the United States Department of State (1997) speaks for itself:

> "Some Turkish Cypriots living in the (Greek Cypriot) controlled area face difficulties in obtaining identification cards and other government documents, especially if they were born after 1974. Turkish Cypriots also appear to be subjected to harassment and surveillance by the Greek Cypriot police. One Turkish Cypriot man was murdered in the South in August by unknown assailants."

The Turkish Cypriot side is hopeful that the international community will give the necessary strong signals to the Greek Cypriot side with a view to ending the unrelenting campaign of defamation which is deepening the current crisis of confidence between the two peoples and the two states.

I should be grateful if the text of the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Economic and Social Council under item 14 (g) of the provisional agenda.

(Signed) Aytuğ PLUMER
Representative
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

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Integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction[1]

1. Almost three years ago, at its substantive session of 1995, the Economic and Social Council launched a major initiative to develop a coherent and well-coordinated response by the United Nations system to the global agenda emerging from the major conferences of the 1990s. The Council agreed that such a response must be built around an integrated set of themes and goals derived from the outcomes of these conferences. The United Nations system as a whole could then coalesce around these common themes and provide integrated support to Governments for their follow-up at the national level. The Council not only identified the key cross-cutting themes emanating from these conferences,[2] but also defined the broad orientations and the modalities that needed to be pursued by the system for carrying them forward at the global, regional and national levels.

2. In adopting its agreed conclusions on the subject in 1995, the Council took a major step forward by providing a coherent set of guidelines for developing a coordinated response to this global agenda at the intergovernmental as well as the inter-agency level. The principal purpose was to translate the internationally agreed goals and objectives into a consistent set of national strategies, policies and programmes for the implementation of which the United Nations system could provide integrated support to Governments.

3. The Council also decided to play a key role in guiding the system and its subsidiary bodies in developing such a coordinated approach. It has done so in two ways: first, by placing the issue of coordinated follow-up on its agenda on a regular basis and, secondly, by reviewing, at its coordination segment, the cross-cutting themes of conferences, such as poverty eradication, gender mainstreaming, the enabling environment and human rights. The agreed conclusions of the Council on these themes have constituted a significant step forward in developing a coordinated approach. The Council has provided, through its conclusions, clear guidance to the United Nations system and to its own subsidiary bodies to strengthen coordination and avoid overlap and duplication. The session of the Council from 13 to 15 May 1998 devoted to this issue, as the first subject-oriented session of its kind, represents an important new stage in this process. Not only does it demonstrate the Council's continuing engagement in this process, but it is also a part of the overall effort to strengthen the Council's coordination and management functions vis-à-vis its subsidiary bodies and the United Nations system at large.

4. At the inter-agency level, the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) has in turn responded

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[1] This report was prepared in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 1997/61, by which the Council decided to consider annually the integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits, and requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the progress achieved by the United Nations system at the intergovernmental, inter-agency and country levels, with specific recommendations.

The report was prepared by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat in cooperation with other organizations of the United Nations system. It places a special focus on the recently completed work of three task forces and the review by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and therefore does not analyse in detail the follow-up to individual conferences. Nor does it attempt an overall assessment of progress made in achieving conference goals. Rather, the aim is to focus on coordination of the United Nations system's response to conferences. The report is organized in such a way that its various sections can facilitate the panel discussions during the session on, respectively, national experiences with the integrated and coordinated implementation of conferences; the experiences of functional commissions; integrated and coordinated implementation by the United Nations, the specialized agencies and the funds and programmes; the role of regional commissions; and revitalizing the guidance role of the Council. The report consists of three sections. The introduction presents an overview and assessment of the work of the task forces; section II addresses follow-up to conferences at the intergovernmental level, highlighting ways to further enhance the coordination functions and management and oversight by the Economic and Social Council of its subsidiary machinery; section III is devoted to the ACC review of coordinated follow-up to conferences at the country and regional levels, including issues of coordination in reporting and monitoring; and section IV reviews the follow-up to task forces by existing inter-agency bodies.

[2] The cross-cutting themes identified in the Secretary-General's report (E/1995/86) were: (i) a stable macroeconomic policy framework conducive to development; (ii) finance for development and external debt; (iii) international trade and commodities; (iv) science and technology; (v) eradication of poverty and hunger; (vi) access to productive occupational opportunities, full employment and family incomes; (vii) gender equality, equity and empowerment of women; (viii) basic social services for all; (ix) promoting social integration; (x) environment and natural resources; (xi) Africa and special categories; (xii) participation, democracy, human rights, accountability and partnerships with major groups. These themes were grouped around the broader themes of an enabling environment, employment and sustainable livelihoods, basic social services for all, and environment and natural resources.

to and moved in line with the priority given to this issue by the Council by placing the coordinated follow-up to conferences high on its agenda. Over the past several years, ACC has sought systematically to develop an integrated and coordinated approach to the follow-up to international conferences. It has had regular policy discussions on various cross-cutting themes, such as poverty eradication, gender mainstreaming, human rights and the role of civil society. In particular, it has consistently underscored that poverty eradication is an overriding goal of the system that requires its sustained and coordinated efforts. It has also put in place several inter-agency arrangements for the follow-up to conferences.[3] In order to address the cross-cutting aspects of various conferences, ACC established in October 1995 three ad hoc inter-agency task forces on (a) basic social services for all, with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) as lead agency; (b) full employment and sustainable livelihoods, with the International Labour Organization (ILO) as lead agency; and (c) an enabling environment for economic and social development, with the World Bank as lead agency.

5. As the task forces completed their assigned work and were discontinued, ACC assessed their work and made a number of decisions for ensuring that the momentum for implementation that they generated was sustained. As a first step, and drawing upon the conclusions and recommendations formulated by the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) and by the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD), a workshop was convened at Turin, Italy, in December 1997, on coordinated follow-up to conferences at the field level, with the participation of resident coordinators and government representatives, the agencies leading the task forces, and the secretariats responsible for conference follow-up. The workshop, *inter alia,* developed integrated guidance for the resident coordinator system for pursuing a coordinated approach at the country level.

6. Overall, ACC has found that the task forces have constituted an unprecedented system-wide effort in providing integrated, coordinated and productive support to Governments in the follow-up to global agendas. The task forces have contributed to the promotion of a clearer understanding within the United Nations system of the policy framework and development agenda at the country level and have highlighted the need for continuing dialogue among the agencies as well as with Governments. They have developed an effective framework for promoting integrated follow-up action and have used a number of innovative methods in their work, including the modality of lead agencies, the use of country reviews, the production of a number of reference materials and guideline notes for use at the country level and the organization of country seminars. The task forces have also developed a strong sense of commitment and cooperation among organizations and, in particular, a clearer sense of agreement between the Bretton Woods institutions and other organizations in supporting the development agenda at the country level.

7. The results of the task forces confirmed the powerful synergy between economic growth and social sector investment and the need to maintain a proper balance between growth objectives and social development with respect to resource allocation. They confirmed the positive relationship between output growth and employment expansion as well as the validity of the goal of full employment for all countries. The importance of private sector involvement was recognized while reaffirming the essential role of the public sector in the provision of basic social services and in setting up social safety nets. The work of the task forces also gave visibility to such cross-cutting concerns as recognizing the need to focus on hunger and food security in strategies for employment and sustainable livelihoods and for basic social services. It addressed ongoing initiatives emanating from conferences, such as the 20/20 initiative.

8. The task forces also highlighted various aspects of economic and social rights, focusing on the importance of promoting gender equality and the need to provide social protection for the unemployed and other disadvantaged groups, including women and child workers in the labour force. They underscored the responsibility of Governments for promoting balanced and sustainable development and stressed the importance of good governance and social dialogue in ensuring transparent processes of decision-making, accountability and consensus-building among all strata of civil society.

9. Overall, the task forces have shown that there is a large degree of consensus and consistency of understanding within the United Nations system on the broad elements of the policy framework for implementing the goals of the conferences. As a result, coordination can be more effective

[3] Starting with the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development, followed by the Inter-Agency Task Force on the International Conference on Population and Development, the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (on the implementation of the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women and gender-related recommendations emanating from other international conferences) and specific arrangements for inter-agency follow-up to Habitat II and the World Food Summit

because it is underpinned by a generally agreed policy framework. Differences, however, remain among agencies with respect to priorities or sequencing of policies. These stem, in part, from the different mandates and competencies of the agencies. Nonetheless, this diversity is considered important because it provides Governments with options and choices.

10. ACC has called upon organizations of the United Nations system to maintain, in cooperation with Governments, the momentum thus created, with a view to providing sustained support to countries in translating the commitments made at conferences into concrete national policies and programmes. ACC also agreed that the question of conference follow-up should be placed in the broader context of United Nations system reform and of the system's efforts to enhance its capacity to pursue the global agendas in a coherent and effective way, while making use of the strengths and resources of civil society. It reaffirmed once again that sustainable development provides a broad framework to guide the system's work and that poverty eradication remains a fundamental commitment for the system, as well as the importance of mainstreaming human rights, gender, environmental, population and children-related questions and issues concerning information and communication technologies.

11. ACC has further directed that, following the completion of the work of the task forces, the primary responsibility for inter-agency coordinated follow-up to conferences at Headquarters rests with ACC and its standing bodies. It has provided guidance on the responsibilities of its standing committees and on a network approach that uses task managers (see section IV below).

Recommendation: The Council may wish to note the progress made within the United Nations system, including through the work of the task forces, in building consensus and consistency of understanding on the broad elements of a framework for implementing the goals of the conferences and to invite all organizations to take these elements fully into account in developing their programmes and activities, particularly at the country level.

II. Coordinated follow-up at the intergovernmental level: the role of the Economic and Social Council

12. At the United Nations, follow-up to conferences has been taking place in a three-tiered structure composed of the functional commission with primary responsibility in this regard, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. Section II.A below builds on the Council's past guidance[4] and highlights a few advances that can be made to ensure a more integrated follow-up by the Council and its functional and regional commissions. The Council's guidance and its interaction with the Executive Boards of the United Nations funds and programmes and with the governing bodies of the specialized agencies are addressed below in section II.B.

A. Coordinated follow-up to conferences by the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary machinery

1. Preparing five-year reviews

13. The Council has a role in ensuring coordinated preparations of the forthcoming five-year reviews of conferences (the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD), the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)) and will also contribute substantively to these processes.

[4] In 1997, the Council was presented with an update on progress towards a better sharing of tasks and enhanced interaction within this three-tiered structure, as a follow-up to the Council's guidance (see the report of the Secretary-General on integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of the major United Nations conferences and summits (E/1997/73)) and with a report on the implementation of its 1996 agreed conclusions on poverty eradication (E/1997/58). See also the note by the Secretary-General on policy issues arising from the reports of the Executive Boards of United Nations funds and programmes (E/1997/89).

Table 1
Five-year and other reviews of conferences

	Role of ECOSOC in the review	*Preparatory body for final preparations of the review*	*Highest intergovernmental body conducting the review*
World Conference on Human Rights	• Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (VDPA) goes through ECOSOC (1998) • Coordination segment (1998) on follow-up to and implementation of VDPA	Commission on Human Rights	General Assembly, fifty-third session (1998)
International Conference on Population and Development	Further to General Assembly resolution 52/188, the Commission on Population and Development (as preparatory committee) reports through ECOSOC	Open-ended Commission on Population and Development serves as preparatory committee	General Assembly, special session (30 June-2 July 1999)
Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States	The report of the Commission on Sustainable Development is before the Council	Commission on Sustainable Development (1999)	General Assembly, two-day special session before the fifty-fourth session (1999)
World Summit for Social Development	• Provision of inputs to the substantive activities of the preparatory committee (starts in 1999) • Review of poverty in 1999 (general segment) to contribute to the reviews of WSSD and FWCW	Open-ended preparatory Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly (with substantive inputs from the Commission for Social Development and ECOSOC)	General Assembly, special session in 2000
Fourth World Conference on Women	• The report of CSW on options for the high-level plenary review in 2000 goes through ECOSOC (1998) • One coordination segment (1997), one operational activities segment (1998) and one high-level segment (to be decided) on gender mainstreaming	Open-ended Commission on the Status of Women serves as preparatory committee	High-level review by the General Assembly in 2000 (timing and modalities to be decided at the fifty-second session; CSW proposed General Assembly special session in June)
World Summit for Children	To be determined	Periodic reviews by the Executive Board of UNICEF	General Assembly, special session in 2001 to review achievements of the Summit goals (General Assembly resolution 51/86)
Habitat II	One high-level segment before 2001 on human settlements and implementation of the Habitat Agenda	To be determined	General Assembly, special session in 2001 (modalities to be decided at the fifty-third session (General Assembly resolution 52/190))

	Role of ECOSOC in the review	*Preparatory body for final preparations of the review*	*Highest intergovernmental body conducting the review*
Second United Nations Conference of the Least Developed Countries	To be determined	Intergovernmental preparatory committee, prepared by three regional conferences (General Assembly resolution 52/187)	Third United Nations Conference for the Least Developed Countries in 2001
United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s	Devote part of the high-level segment to the implementation of the New Agenda before the General Assembly review in 2002	To be determined	General Assembly, 2002 (General Assembly resolution 51/32)
Agenda 21	To be determined	To be determined	General Assembly, 2002
World Food Summit	To receive regular reports through the FAO Council on implementation of the Plan of Action as monitored by the FAO Committee on World Food Security	FAO Committee on World Food Security	FAO Committee on World Food Security. By 2006, major progress assessment of the implementation of WFS, and mid-term review of achieving the Summit target. The outcome of the CFS review will be transmitted to the FAO Council and by the FAO Council to the FAO Conference and to ECOSOC
General Assembly consideration of public administration and development at its fiftieth session	Review of the Secretary-General's report to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session	Meeting of Experts on the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance	General Assembly, fifty-third session (1998)

14. Table 1 highlights the preparatory process for the reviews of several conferences and the role of the Council.[5] Largely as a result of its 1995 agreed conclusions, the Council contributes to the follow-up to conferences and to five-year reviews through focused examination of cross-cutting themes emerging from conferences, particularly at its coordination segment, but also at its operational activities and high-level segments. As noted above, the Council has thus far reviewed the themes of poverty eradication and the enabling environment for development. The advancement of women was taken up at the 1997 coordination segment, will be addressed at the 1998 operational activities segment and will also be dealt with at a future high-level segment. Similarly, the Council will again examine the theme of poverty eradication in 1999[6] to contribute both to the special session of the General Assembly on the overall review of the World Summit for Social Development and to the five-year review of the Fourth World Conference on Women. At its high-level segment in 1998, the Council will take up the theme of market access. In addition, the Council is to take up the theme of human rights at its 1998 coordination segment.

15. The Council's main contribution has thus been in reviewing cross-cutting themes emanating from conferences. It would therefore seem appropriate that its contribution to the five-year reviews should also be made through an overall review of these cross-cutting themes, perhaps during the Council's substantive session of 2000.

16. In contributing to conference reviews, it should be kept in mind that, as in the case of the conference agendas, the five-year reviews cover many cross-cutting themes and common goals. While common goals can certainly benefit from being addressed from different perspectives, it is important for each preparatory committee to be aware of how other review processes and forums have approached such themes. Thus, the substantive reports presented to one preparatory committee on a given theme could be made available to another, as could the results of a preparatory committee's consideration of a given subject. Such exchanges could be beneficial in particular for gender

[5] The FAO Committee on World Food Security (CFS) has been entrusted by the World Food Summit with monitoring the implementation of its Plan of Action. The CFS will provide reports through the FAO Council to the Economic and Social Council.

[6] Further to Council resolution 1997/61, under the agenda item on the integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits.

mainstreaming and for cross-cutting issues such as the enabling environment for development, human rights, poverty, basic social services, the rights of children, migrants and refugees, and the like.

17. It may be recalled that the regional commissions also have a role in convening high-level and other meetings for reviewing the implementation and follow-up of conferences. For instance, the preparatory process for the five-year review of ICPD will draw on population meetings in all regions; regional commissions are also extensively involved in the follow-up to FWCW; and high-level meetings by regional commissions are mandated to review the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, in cooperation with regional intergovernmental organizations and banks. The World Summit for Social Development mandated the regional commissions to convene meetings at a high political level to, *inter alia*, review progress made in implementing the outcome of the Summit (General Assembly resolution 50/161). Such high-level meetings have been convened by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).[7] As requested by the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) will be convening a regional meeting as a follow-up to the Summit in Kenya in October 1998.

18. It may be noted that the General Assembly in its resolution 50/225 on public administration and development approved a comprehensive plan of action covering the broad themes of governance, administrative and financial reforms, and human resources and institutional development. It thus provided policy guidelines in key areas of development and international cooperation that are closely related to cross-cutting issues in the cycle of conferences.

Recommendations:

(i) In view of the Council's coordination function within the system and the role it has played in reviewing cross-cutting themes of conferences, the Council could consider conducting an overall review of progress made on these cross-cutting themes and of the effectiveness of United Nations system support for the attainment of conference goals in the year 2000. The Council could invite the governing bodies of the organizations of the United Nations system, to contribute to the review by examining relevant cross-cutting themes, taking into account the areas of competence of their respective organizations (see also recommendation (ii) in section II.A.2 and recommendation (ii) in section II.A.4 below).

(ii) The Council could call upon its functional commissions and the Secretariat to ensure substantive interaction during the preparation of the five-year reviews of ICPD, WSSD , FWCW and Habitat II. Reports presented to one preparatory committee on a given cross-cutting theme could be made available to others. To support gender mainstreaming, the Council's agreed conclusions on gender mainstreaming and the reports and agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women on gender mainstreaming and on relevant themes should also be made available to preparatory committees.

(iii) The Council could request the preparatory committees and other bodies entrusted with the review of ICPD, WSSD, FWCW and Habitat II to treat the outcomes of its coordination, high-level and operational activities segments on cross-cutting themes of conferences or on a given conference review, as integral parts of the five-year reviews of conferences.

2. Sharing tasks and interaction among functional commissions

19. Managing and harmonizing the work programmes of functional commissions is a basic function of the Council, and crucial for an integrated follow-up to conferences. In the wake of the Council's 1995 and 1996 agreed conclusions on the follow-up to conferences and on poverty eradication, respectively, the sharing of tasks among commissions has improved and commissions have increasingly focused on the core area of the conference for which they have main responsibility.[8] For instance, upon the request of the

[7] The Fifth Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Social Development was held in Manila from 5 to 11 November 1997; ECLAC convened the First Regional Conference on the Follow-up to the Social Summit in Sao Paulo from 6 to 9 April 1997; while it has no mandate in the social area calling for specific follow-up action to the Summit, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), convened an expert group meeting on employment in February 1998, worked on social statistics and self-employment, and held a workshop on poverty among the ageing.

[8] See the reports of the Secretary-General on integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits (E/1997/73), coordination of United Nations system activities in the area of poverty eradication (E/1997/58) and gender mainstreaming.

Council, the Commission on Population and Development agreed not to place special emphasis on education as its 1999 theme, in view of the fact that the Commission for Social Development is to consider education in 1999 in the context of basic social services for all.[9] Also, the new programme of work of the Commission on Sustainable Development for 1998-2002 no longer takes up generic discussions of such issues as population and poverty, which although part of Agenda 21, can be more effectively addressed by the Commission on Population and Development and the Commission for Social Development in follow-up to ICPD and WSSD respectively.[10]

20. With the upcoming five-year reviews of the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women, three of the Council's functional commissions will probably prepare multi-year work programmes for the years 2001-2004/2005, for the Council's consideration.[11] This could be the opportunity for the Council to ensure in advance that these work programmes are well coordinated and that all important issues for conference follow-up are addressed adequately in the appropriate forum. To facilitate harmonization, commissions should adopt their proposed work programmes for conference follow-up in full awareness of the themes to be considered by other commissions, as well as major upcoming international events.[12] Table 2 highlights the work programmes of functional commissions for the coming years.

Continued exchange of substantive inputs

21. The Council called upon its functional commissions to exchange inputs on cross-cutting themes of conferences. Since then, the commissions have increasingly forwarded their agreed conclusions to one another and to other forums. However, concern has been expressed that receiving bodies do not always address such substantive contributions adequately.[13] In this respect, the Economic and Social Council and its secretariat could play a greater role in ensuring that the outcomes of the functional commissions receive sufficient attention. For instance, the Council could adopt a resolution or decision conveying one or several such inputs and possibly highlighting the main aspects of their contribution.

22. Nonetheless, exchanges are taking place and a substantive dialogue is emerging, whereby commissions are sharing their perspectives on a cross-cutting issue. For instance, the 1998 agreed conclusions of the Commission for Social Development on violence, crime and the problem of illicit drugs and substance abuse as factors of social disintegration will be transmitted to the special session of the General Assembly on drugs, through the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. The agreed conclusions can certainly help the Assembly to address the longer-term social dimensions of drug abuse, which were recognized but not addressed in depth by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.[14] Also in 1998 the Commission on Human Rights held a special debate on gender, addressing substantive outcomes of the Commission on the Status of Women.

23. Commissions could interact in several other areas as well. First, as requested by the Economic and Social Council in its agreed conclusions 1996/1, in 1999, the Commission for Social Development will discuss issues arising from the conference targets for basic social services for all. This work should be drawn upon by other commissions as they examine relevant themes on their work programmes.

24. Secondly, measures to protect the rights of older persons are a cross-cutting theme of a number of conferences.[15] In view of the upcoming International Year of Older Persons in 1999, it is important to harmonize the approaches of functional commissions to ageing and older persons. In 1998, the Commission on the Status of Women adopted a resolution on older women and support systems (resolution 42/4), and in 1999, the Commission on Population and Development will examine the theme of

(E/1997/66).

[9] Agreed conclusions 1996/1.

[10] The Commission on Sustainable Development will address these issues only in relation to specific sectoral or cross-sectoral themes of its agenda.

[11] While ICPD will be reviewed in 1999, the Commission on Population and Development has already decided on a theme for its session in 2000.

[12] The Commission on Population and Development, at its 1998 session, approved possible themes proposed by the Bureau for 2001, 2002 and 2003 after having considered special themes considered by other functional commissions.

[13] For instance, at its nineteenth special session, the General Assembly did not address the agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women on women and the environment.

[14] The views of the Commission for Social Development that specific policies and programmes to prevent and eliminate crime and drugs must be tackled as part of an integrated strategy for economic and social development that equally seeks to understand and address the causes of such phenomena should indeed enrich the debates at the session.

[15] World Conference on Human Rights, WSSD, ICPD and FWCW.

Table 2
Programmes of work of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and selected bodies

	Multi-year work programme	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*
Selected major event or events of the year		• Overall review of World Conference on Human Rights (WCHR) • Special session of the General Assembly on narcotic drugs	• Overall review of ICPD: General Assembly special session (30 June-2 July 1999) • International Year of Older Persons •World Conference on Science for the 21st Century	• Overall review of WSSD: General Assembly special session • Overall review of FWCW: high-level plenary review by the General Assembly (modalities to be decided, CSW proposed General Assembly special session in June) •UNCTAD X	• Review of World Summit for Children: General Assembly special session •Review of Habitat II: General Assembly special session • Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries	• Review by the General Assembly of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s • Comprehensive review of Agenda 21
Commission on Population and Development	1996-1999	Health and mortality (emphasis on health-development linkages, gender and age)	• Population growth, structure, distribution (emphasis on sustained economic growth and sustainable development) • Quinquennial review and appraisal of ICPD	Population, gender and development		
Commission for Social Development	1997-2000 Yearly: • Enabling environment • Social development goals in structural adjustment programmes • Resources • Framework for cooperation in social development	Promoting social integration and participation of all, including vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and persons	• Social services for all • Initiation of the overall review of WSSD	Contribution of the Commission to the overall review and appraisal of the Summit		

	Multi-year work programme	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*
Commission on the Status of Women	1997-2000	• Violence against women • Women and armed conflict • Human rights of women • The girl child	• Women and health • Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women • Initiation of the comprehensive review and appraisal of FWCW	• Comprehensive review of FWCW • Emerging issues		
Commission on Sustainable Development	1998-2002 Overriding issues: poverty, consumption and production patterns	*Sectoral*: • Strategic approaches to freshwater management • Review of outstanding chapters of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States *Cross-sectoral*: Transfer of technology, capacity-building, education, science, awareness-building *Economic sector/major group*: Industry	Comprehensive review of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States *Sectoral*: Oceans and seas *Cross-sectoral*: Consumption and production patterns *Economic sector/major group*: Tourism	*Sectoral*: Integrated planning and management of land resources *Cross-sectoral*: • Financial resources, trade and investment • Economic growth *Economic sector/major group*: • Agriculture •Day of Indigenous People	*Sectoral*: Atmosphere, energy *Cross-sectoral*: • Information for decision-making and participation • International cooperation for an enabling environment *Economic sector/major group*: Energy/transport	Comprehensive review of Agenda 21
Commission on Human Settlements (standing committee)	• No programme • Focus on four substantive areas: • Adequate shelter for all • Sustainable human settlements in an urbanizing world		• Monitoring Habitat II implementation and assessing its impact • Preparations for General Assembly special session		Monitoring Habitat II implementation and assessing its impact	

	Multi-year work programme	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*
	• Capacity-building and institutional development					
	• International cooperation and coordination					
Commission on Human Rights	• No programme	Five-year review of VDPA				
	• Standing agenda item on follow-up to WCHR					
Meeting of Experts on the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance	• No programme					
	• Focus on relation between public administration and the implementation of conference commitments					

population growth, structure and distribution, while the Commission for Social Development will consider options for the review and appraisal of the International Plan of Action on Ageing. The Council could recommend that these examinations should take into account the gender perspective and that the respective bureaus and secretariats should cooperate closely in their preparation. Finally, the Council could focus on the issue of older persons and ageing when it considers the reports of its functional commissions during its general segment in 1999.

25. Thirdly, in following up the World Summit for Social Development, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development has examined the application of science and technology to poverty reduction and to furthering the basic needs of people. It has also discussed ways to diffuse information technologies more widely to developing countries and those with economies in transition. This work could serve as an input into the work of other commissions for their monitoring and review of conferences.

Strengthening interaction

26. Direct interaction among the bureaus of the functional commissions and the Council can help in developing substantive dialogue. This interaction has actually greatly improved. In 1998, the Bureau of the Council met with the bureaus of the functional commissions based in New York[16] to discuss substantive aspects of the sessions of the Commissions, preparation of the five-year reviews of conferences, and follow-up on the guidance role of the Council. Based on this useful experience and on the experience gained at the resumed organizational session of the Council in May,[17] the Bureau of the Council could convene regular meetings with the chairpersons of all functional commissions.[18]

27. It has also been proposed that, where appropriate, the bureaus of functional commissions should be elected at the end of a commission's session rather than at the beginning. This arrangement, which has already been implemented by the Commission on Sustainable Development, would facilitate the preparations for the sessions of the commissions (the same bureau would provide substantive

[16] As of March 1998, the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council had met with the Bureaus of the Commission for Social Development, the Commission on Population and Development and the Commission on the Status of Women. It also expected to meet with the Bureau of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

[17] A panel will be held with chairpersons of the functional commissions.

[18] Meetings with chairpersons of functional commissions were called for in the Council's 1996 agreed conclusions.

guidance in preparations and lead the work during a session) and would facilitate substantive interaction among the bureaus of the commissions and the Council. This proposal could be further examined in the light of the specific needs and working methods of the various commissions. It may be noted that this approach might not be appropriate for the Commission on Human Rights, owing to the nature of its work.

28. In addition, there is also a need to encourage continuity between successive bureaus through, for example, a rotation system whereby one of the vice-chairpersons would become chairperson of a commission at its next session, the practice currently followed by the Council itself. Interactions between the new and outgoing bureaus could also be encouraged.

Recommendations:

(i) The Council could invite its functional commissions and the preparatory committees for five-year conference reviews, when preparing the future multi-year work programmes of commissions, to take into account themes planned for consideration by other commissions, as well as other major upcoming international events.

(ii) At its substantive session of 2000, in the context of its overall review of progress with regard to the cross-cutting themes of conferences (see recommendation (i) in section II.A.1 above), the Council could conduct an integrated examination of the newly proposed multi-year programmes of work of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Population and Development and the Commission for Social Development, as relevant, to ensure harmonization and coordination on cross-cutting issues.

(iii) The Council could encourage continued interaction among its commissions through the exchange of inputs, meetings of their bureaus, and the exchange of views among the chairpersons or secretariats of the commissions.

(iv) The 1999 review by the Commission for Social Development of issues related to the targets of conferences for basic social services for all should be drawn upon by other commissions in their work on the follow-up to conferences.

(v) The Council could invite its commissions to pay special attention to the issue of older persons at their 1999 sessions, within established agendas and work programmes. The Council could recommend that there be close cooperation among bureaus and secretariats in preparing the work of the Commission for Social Development and that of the Commission on Population and Development on issues related to older persons in 1999. The 1998 resolution of the Commission on the Status of Women on the issue of older women and support systems (resolution 42/4) should also be taken into account.

(vi) The Council could invite its functional commissions, in reviewing relevant aspects of conferences, to draw upon the work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on information and communication technology and its contribution to social development goals.

(vii) The Bureau of the Council could convene, in addition to meetings with the bureaus of individual commissions, regular meetings with the chairpersons of all functional commissions, in preparation for the sessions of the commissions and the Council and for the five-year conference reviews, or on specific issues.

(viii) The Council could decide to examine the possibility of harmonizing, as appropriate, the timing of the elections of the bureaus of functional commissions, with a view to determining whether it would be feasible and practicable for the bureaus of a number of commissions to be elected at the end of their sessions rather than at the beginning. This examination could be based on a report highlighting the methods and timing of the elections in each commission, the pros and cons of alternative options, the issues related to the transition phase and to the timing of the election of members, and the experience of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Functional commissions could be invited to present their views on the timing of bureau elections, based on the same report that would go to the Council for its final consideration and action.

3. Substantive interaction between the Council and its subsidiary machinery

29. Coordinated follow-up to conferences requires that the Council exercise its guidance role effectively over its subsidiary machinery and that its guidance be implemented. To ensure that this is done, since 1995 the President of the Council has conveyed the Council's agreed conclusions and

resolutions to the chairpersons of its functional commissions. Several commissions have taken effective action to follow up on this guidance.[19] For more systematic follow-up, the President of the Council also proposed that all functional commissions consider having a standing agenda item on the follow-up to the Council's agreed conclusions and recommendations. The proposed agenda for the 1999 session of the Statistical Commission will contain such an item, but thus far no other commission has taken action. The Council could consider reiterating this proposal.

30. There is also scope for improving the Council's substantive examination of the work of its functional and regional commissions. At neither its high-level segment nor its coordination segment has the Council taken full advantage of the work of its subsidiary machinery on the themes before the Council. Consequently, it is important that the attention of the Council, at all its segments, be drawn to the agreed conclusions and resolutions of its functional commissions that are relevant to the theme under consideration. Commissions, in transmitting their agreed conclusions and other outputs to the Council, could also highlight the main aspects requiring the Council's attention. The Council, in selecting themes for its high-level and coordination segments, could request its relevant functional commissions to provide inputs for its deliberations

Recommendation: The Council could invite its functional commissions to consider having a standing agenda item on the follow-up to the Council's agreed conclusions and recommendations. It could, likewise, consider the issues emerging from the work of functional commissions in an integrated manner.[20]

4. Learning from each other: different approaches to monitoring conference implementation

31. Functional commissions are progressively adapting their working methods for the follow-up to conferences, and the Council could serve as a forum for the exchange of best practices in this area. In particular, commissions have strengthened their efforts to involve actors of civil society in their deliberations, through panel discussions with representatives of civil society and by encouraging Governments to include in their delegations relevant actors of civil society. In the Commission on Sustainable Development, an attempt is being made to enable civil society to contribute during the preparatory stage as well by inviting major groups to provide inputs for the preparation of reports for the Commission in accordance with clear guidelines. At the same time, major groups are encouraged to adopt arrangements for coordination and interaction among themselves in providing inputs to the Commission on Sustainable Development. This dual approach could be considered by other commissions and possibly the Council on certain themes.

32. While the Council has, over the years, granted consultative status to a large number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and many of them participate in the work of the Council, it needs to establish a more systematic dialogue with the key actors of civil society that are active on the themes addressed by the Council.

33. Commissions have an important role as a forum for the exchange of national best practices for conference implementation. In 1998, seven government representatives made special in-depth presentations to the Commission on Social Development on the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development. The Commission also encouraged Governments to provide, on a voluntary basis, information on specific participatory initiatives at different levels so that it can consider periodically the lessons learned.[21]

Recommendations:

(i) The Council could encourage its functional commission to report to it on the best practices they have used in their follow-up to conferences.

(ii) As a first step towards instituting a more systematic dialogue with key actors of civil society, the Council could consider devoting a special meeting or day to such a dialogue within the context of its overall review of cross-cutting themes of conference follow-up, proposed above (see recommendation (i) in section II.A.1).

[19] The Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women, in particular, made a number of proposals to the President of the Council on implementing the Council's 1997 agreed conclusions for mainstreaming gender in the work of the Council and its subsidiary machinery. An account of the implementation of the agreed conclusions of the coordination segment will be presented to the Council at its substantive session of 1998.

[20] See the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 50/227 and 52/12 B on the reform of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields (E/1998/__), to be issued.

[21] See the agreed conclusions of the Commission for Social Development on promoting social integration and participation of all people, including disadvantaged groups and persons.

B. Interaction of the Economic and Social Council with the Executive Boards of United Nations funds and programmes and with agency governing bodies

1. Improving the Council's guidance over operational activities and the interaction with the Executive Boards of United Nations funds and programmes

34. The follow-up to conferences is reviewed by the Executive Boards of the funds and programmes. In particular, the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has reviewed the follow-up to the World Summit for Children (WSC) annually since 1991[22] and, in June, will review the follow-up to major conferences, with an emphasis on WSC and ICPD. The Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund (UNDP/UNFPA) has provided to UNFPA, on a regular basis and as directed by the General Assembly in resolution 49/128, guidance and policy advice with regard to the implementation of the Programme of Action of ICPD at the country level. The Executive Board of the World Food Programme (WFP) reviews progress in the implementation of WFP commitments to women launched at the Fourth World Conference on Women and the follow-up to the World Food Summit. The Programme Coordination Board acts as the governing body of the Joint and Co-sponsored Programme on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) (UNAIDS), and was established to mainstream and coordinate responses to cross-cutting issues affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

35. The guidance function of the Council vis-à-vis the Executive Boards of United Nations funds and programmes was reinforced by General Assembly resolution 50/227 and, more recently, by the Agenda for Development (General Assembly resolution 51/240, annex). The Agenda invites the Council to provide guidance to the Executive Boards of funds and programmes and to monitor the Assembly policies and guidelines, including operational aspects of the follow-up to conferences. However, it has been noted that the Council was not fully able to exercise this guidance due to a number of factors.[23] The Executive Boards, in their reports, do not refer any policy issues to the Council or the General Assembly for decision and guidance, although both the Assembly and the Council requested that this be done. To ensure full information to the Council, the reports of Executive Boards could also usefully include information on how they support the coordinated follow-up to major United Nations conferences, including support through regional and country programmes and by establishing agreed programme priorities and allocating the corresponding resources.

36. Since country strategy notes (CSNs) should provide a coherent view of the coordinated follow-up to conferences as they relate to a specific country, it is also important that Executive Boards, as required by the General Assembly, take into account existing CSNs as a reference when considering their specific country programmes.[24] It may be noted that the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) is expected to help to link all individual country programmes in a more coherent manner after the relevance of global conferences and other international agendas for a country has been reviewed, taking into account national needs and priorities and lessons learned by the United Nations system in providing development support to the country. Indeed, each fund and programme is expected to reflect UNDAF through the programme processes established by their respective intergovernmental bodies. Individual country programmes will be approved by governing bodies after the United Nations country team has reviewed them, to help ensure that they are responsive to UNDAF and national priorities as well as the goals of conferences.

37. Collaboration among various Executive Boards is also important for the coordinated follow-up to conferences. In this respect, on 28 January 1998, the Executive Boards of UNICEF and UNDP/UNFPA held a joint session for the first time to review progress in implementing United Nations reform at the country level, with special reference to UNDAF in Viet Nam. The secretariats continue to work together for identifying possible areas of common interest for such sessions in future.[25]

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[22] The Plan of Action adopted by the World Summit for Children requested the governing bodies of the relevant specialized agencies and the United Nations organs to include a periodic review of the implementation of the Declaration and Plan of Action at their regular session (see A/45/625, annex, para. 35 (v)).

[23] Note by the Secretary-General on policy issues arising from the reports of the Executive Boards of United Nations funds and programmes (E/1997/89).

[24] General Assembly resolutions 47/199, para. 9 (c), and 50/227, para. 18.

[25] See also the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 50/227 and 52/12 B (E/1998/__), to be issued.

2. Interaction with agency governing bodies

38. The governing organs of specialized agencies have responsibilities for the follow-up and monitoring of conferences. This is all the more the case when a specialized agency has been assigned a special role in implementation, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) role with regard to the commitment of the World Summit for Social Development on employment. Agency responsibility is important, as agencies are accountable in the first place to their own governing structure. To enhance its capacity to provide effective policy guidance in the follow-up to conferences by the United Nations system, the Council would need to improve and enhance its interaction and linkages with agencies and their governing bodies. Agencies could have greater access to the decision-making processes of the Council. The Secretary-General would ensure more substantive and extensive participation of the agencies in the preparation of reports, and the Council could provide for their more visible participation in its sessions through panels and other means. In addition to ACC, there should also be greater interaction between the Council and the governing bodies of specialized agencies. For instance, relevant outcomes of the Council could be transmitted to these bodies and the results of their consideration of relevant issues could be brought to the attention of the Council under the appropriate agenda items.

Recommendations:

(i) The Council could invite Executive Boards to highlight in their respective reports to the Council the issues requiring its decision and guidance, in line with General Assembly resolution 50/227.[26] The reports of Executive Boards could also usefully include information on how they support the coordinated follow-up to global conferences.

(ii) The President of the Council could convey relevant outcomes of the Council's deliberation on the follow-up to global conferences to the governing bodies of specialized agencies as well as to the Executive Boards of funds and programmes.

(iii) At its substantive session of 1998, the Council could consider holding a panel discussion on the integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up to conferences with the heads of a few specialized agencies that have major responsibility for conference follow-up.

III. ACC review of coordinated follow-up to conferences at the country and regional levels

A. Coordinated follow-up to conferences at the country level

39. As indicated above, ACC has provided systematic guidance on strengthening coordination in conference follow-up at the country level, including through the use of the task force outputs.

1. Coordinated support for national integrated strategies

Task force outputs: dissemination and sharing of best practices

40. Building on the innovative practices initiated by IACSD and the task force on the follow-up to ICPD, the entire United Nations system,[27] including the Bretton Woods institutions, has used the task force mechanism to develop joint and coherent approaches to translating the normative recommendations of the conferences into operational guidance for country-level action. Based on an intensive process of inter-agency consultations and country reviews carried out over the past two years, the task forces have produced a wide variety of outputs covering a broad range of policy issues (see table 3). These outputs can be broadly categorized as follows: (i) clarification of the key elements of the policy framework for pursuing conference goals; (ii) recommendations and guidelines for United Nations system programming; (iii) country reviews and case studies; (iv) proposals on other areas requiring attention (the role of civil society; the elaboration of statistics and indicators); and (vi) recommendations on institutional arrangements for follow-up to the work of the task forces.

41. To bring the substantive work of the task forces and other conference follow-up mechanisms to bear on operational activities, ACC has decided that the outputs of the task forces and other guidelines for the implementation

[26] The Assembly stated that the governing boards should be requested to highlight in their respective reports to the Council the issues requiring examination and identify action to be taken (resolution 50/227, annex, para. 62). The Council subsequently requested the Executive Boards to identify specific problems, opportunities and areas in which the Council could provide cross-sectoral coordination and overall guidance on a system-wide basis (resolution 1995/51).

[27] Each task force brought together some 20 organizations.

of conferences should be widely disseminated and fully used. To this end, a standardized guidance note for coordinated conference follow-up at the country level, prepared by CCPOQ and based on the work of the task forces and the Turin workshop, has been sent by the Administrator of UNDP and the executive heads of all agencies to resident coordinators and United Nations system country representatives. Organizations of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, are also in the process of distributing the products, guidelines and country case studies of the task forces.

42. As a follow-up to the ACC decisions, CCPOQ has developed practical modalities for the further dissemination of the task force outputs, such as interregional, regional and subregional seminars and workshops; issuing outcomes of country reviews in different languages; and making information on the outputs available electronically. Those outputs are also being incorporated in the training modules of the organizations of the United Nations system, in particular the United Nations Staff College. In addition to the outputs of the task forces, guidelines are also being prepared for United Nations system policy advisory services in a number of areas that are relevant to conference follow-up, such as sustainable development, human settlements and HIV/AIDS.

43. To supplement and update these guidelines as well as to enhance the impact of United Nations system activities, considerable importance is being attached to identifying and disseminating best practices on the follow-up to conferences. Several initiatives have been taken in this respect. For instance, the Task Force on Basic Social Services for All prepared a report entitled "Review of donor-collaboration in the social sector: three case studies", which identifies lessons learned and best practices. Examples of best practices are also being compiled by IACSD and IACWGE and, with respect to the World Food Summit, an IFAD-managed monitoring and evaluation component, *inter alia*, collects, analyses and disseminates selected country experiences.

Dialogue with the Government and collaborative programming frameworks

44. Governments are the key actors in the implementation of global conferences as they have the responsibility of formulating national plans of action and translating the conclusions of conferences into policies and practical strategies in the light of their national priorities and circumstances, as well as of ensuring consistency of the overall effort for conference follow-up together with their partners. The United Nations system has been assisting Governments at the country level in these activities. A dialogue is being actively pursued between Governments and individual agencies, on the basis of their respective mandates, to internalize conference goals. The resident coordinator system has been active in promoting a broad policy dialogue with Governments, through a number of mechanisms linked with the programming of operational activities for development, notably inter-agency thematic groups. A key concern in implementing conferences is to take into account country-specific situations while considering the specific mandates and capacity of each agency. The experience and outcomes of the task forces have shown how collaborative processes can help to capitalize on such diversity in pursuing global agendas.

45. The General Assembly has reaffirmed that resident coordinators, in full consultation with national Governments, should facilitate a coherent and coordinated United Nations follow-up to major international conferences at the field level.[28] Thus, the resident coordinator system has a key responsibility for providing consolidated United Nations system support to integrated and coordinated implementation of conferences, at the national level.

46. The Turin workshop and its follow-up by CCPOQ have helped in clarifying how the resident coordinator system could best support coordinated follow-up to conferences at the country level. In the context of established United Nations development programmes and processes, the resident coordinator system is to ensure that there is appropriate inter-agency dialogue with national authorities on the cross-sectoral implementation of conferences. Such a dialogue can be most productive if it involves all relevant parts of the Government and includes relevant representatives of civil society and other external partners, as appropriate.[29] The dialogue should aim at helping to align the global agendas with country-specific circumstances, and enable the United Nations system to determine the nature of the support required as well as areas for inter-agency cooperation. A first important step in programming United Nations system support should be a situation analysis by the resident coordinator system and the Government on how national policies and priorities support conference goals and

[28] General Assembly resolution 50/120, para. 39.

[29] The work of the Task Force on Full Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods also revealed that undertaking comprehensive employment policy reviews at the country level can give practical shape to the goals outlined, focus attention on the centrality of employment and help build consensus at the inter-agency level as well as among government and civil society representatives.

Table 3
Highlights of the outputs of the task forces

Type of output	*Task Force on An Enabling Environment for Economic and Social Development*	*Task Force on Full Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods*	*Task Force on Basic Social Services for All*	*Action*
Normative/policy (Policy dialogue/policy framework)	Final reports of the three subgroups[a] E.g., conclusions and recommendations on the macroeconomic framework; recommendations on governance	Synthesis report of the Task Force E.g., validity of the goal of full employment for all countries; promoting full employment and social protection through social dialogue and democratic consensus	Conclusions/principles for national policies and United Nations action reflected in the advocacy card, guidelines and compendium of international commitments relevant to poverty and social integration	Resident coordinator system (RCS) • Regional commissions
Sectoral/specific guidelines, programming, advocacy	Synergy between economic growth and social sector investment, policy dialogue to promote common understanding on development, and links between CSN, UNDAF and other programming frameworks	15-point set of guidelines for adapting the goal of full employment in different countries	• Specific guidelines for the resident coordinator system on six issues (primary health care, reproductive health, basic education, women's empowerment, international migration, national capacity-building in tracking child and maternal mortality) • Advocacy card on basic social services • Compendium of international commitments relevant to poverty eradication and social integration • Wall chart with key indicators to assist countries in monitoring progress in meeting conference goals in the provision of basic social services	• RCS • Regional commissions • Appropriate civil society organizations/ groups
Data and information	• Report on monitoring the development and use of statistical indicators by the United Nations system • Recommendations for the development of system-wide indicators and common country assessments	• Endorsement of the Minimum National Social Data Set • Recommendations for further work	• Wall chart with key indicators to assist countries in monitoring progress in meeting conference goals • "Indicators for population and reproductive health programmes" to monitor ICPD and other conferences	• RCS • United Nations system • CCPOQ • ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities

Type of output	*Task Force on An Enabling Environment for Economic and Social Development*	*Task Force on Full Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods*	*Task Force on Basic Social Services for All*	*Action*
Institutional follow-up	• Inter-agency technical groups to be established to elucidate agencies' differences in analytical frameworks on a number of ACC core-development issues • Pilot schemes in a few countries to test the benefits of intensified/more effective coordination • Development of a common conceptual framework on governance: a common taxonomy of governance interventions • Incorporation of the issue of governance in CSN, the common country assessment (CCA) and UNDAF	• Synthesis report to be issued • Country reports requested to be translated and issued • Regional and subregional seminars • An interregional seminar with country representatives • Training	• Broad dissemination of all outputs • Translation of wall chart and advocacy card • Training in use of outputs through seminars at all levels and through the inclusion of appropriate modules in regular training programmes of United Nations system partners • Organization of a Technical Symposium on International Migration and Development (29 June-3 July 1998)	• RCS • United Nations system

[a] Subgroup on Capacity-building for Governance (lead agency: UNDP), Subgroup on Indicators (lead agency: United Nations Statistics Division), Subgroup on the Macroeconomic Framework for Economic and Social Development (lead agency: World Bank)

on the effectiveness of institutional mechanisms for follow-up and monitoring.

47. Thematic groups are the main instrument for coordinated United Nations system support for conference implementation by the Government. Such groups are being established in many countries, in particular to deal with cross-cutting themes of conferences, such as poverty alleviation, women's empowerment, basic social services, employment and sustainable livelihoods, and HIV/AIDS,[30] as well as with the follow-up to Habitat II and the World Food Summit. The work of such groups tends to be more effective when they have proper staffing and financial support and are linked with the preparation of CSN or other programming frameworks. In this respect, ACC has called upon organizations of the United Nations system to fully utilize the various national-level mechanisms and frameworks, such as CSN and UNDAF, to support the development of national strategies and action plans for integrated conference implementation based on national priorities.

48. The preparation of CSN provides an important opportunity to establish links between this programming instrument and the implementation of conference goals. The ongoing revision of the guidelines on CSN will be an opportunity to ensure that the follow-up to conferences is included as a required key factor in formulating the strategy for United Nations system support at the country level.

49. The launching of UNDAF as a new mechanism to achieve goal-oriented collaboration, programmatic coherence and mutual reinforcement among United Nations programmes of assistance has reinforced the commitment of the United Nations system to assisting Governments in their efforts to implement the recommendations of global conferences. In effect, it establishes a direct linkage between the follow-up to these conferences and the definition of

[30] The report E/1997/73 on integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of the major United Nations conferences and summits presents updated information on the thematic groups set up by resident coordinators on themes of conferences.

related mandates of individual organizations of the United Nations system, on the one hand, and the assessment of the national priorities, taking into account national policies and programmes, on the other.[31] The objectives and strategies presented in UNDAF will take into account the follow-up to the ACC task forces, and the outcomes of other inter-agency processes. It may be noted that UNDAF is initiated after a common country assessment (CCA) has been made, which is based, among other things, on indicators reflecting the follow-up to global conferences.

Interaction with and support for national institutions and strategies

50. These improved programming processes should enable the system to better assist Governments, at their request, in coordinating and harmonizing the various national strategies for conference implementation (box 1 lists national strategies required by a number of recent conferences). As sustainable development strategies exist in many countries, they could serve as a starting point for developing integrated strategies for conferences follow-up.

51. To support integrated conference implementation, the resident coordinator system needs to interact with and support national institutions entrusted with the follow-up to conferences. The United Nations country team should assist and encourage greater policy coordination among these national agencies and ministries, including by fully utilizing existing coordination structures and mechanisms. The setting up of broad-based national consultative bodies mandated by conferences, such as sustainable development councils and the national habitat committees, also need the support of United Nations country teams. For these bodies to be effective, the need for national capacity-building remains paramount.

Making optimum use of the resources of civil society

52. ACC has consistently underscored the important role of civil society in advancing the objectives of international conferences at the national as well as the international level, and has called upon the organizations of the United Nations system to make optimal use of their strengths, advocacy role and resources. The work of the task forces and its review by ACC confirmed the importance of strengthening the involvement of civil society in conference follow-up. The resident coordinator system has been urged to support and encourage the interaction between the Government and civil society in conference follow-up activities. It is expected to carry out this task mainly as facilitator based on a careful review and assessment of the role of civil society organizations in conference follow-up. Greater participation of civil society in thematic groups, sharing of information and capacity-building are among the actions that could be envisaged.

Collaboration between the United Nations development system and the Bretton Woods institutions

53. Recent global conferences have provided a new impetus to closer cooperation between the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions. Indeed, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were actively involved, from the inception, in the preparation of these conferences. And their outcomes have influenced the priorities, policies and activities of these institutions and have catalysed their cooperation with the United Nations. For example, the Declaration on Partnership for Sustainable Global Growth, adopted by the IMF Interim Committee in 1996, addressed a number of conference goals (for example, poverty alleviation and the need to provide well targeted and affordable social safety nets), and the Development Committee and the IMF Interim Committee examined the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development in 1995. Also, one of the major aims of the Strategic Compact on which the World Bank embarked in March 1997 is to renew the Bank's effectiveness in its fight against poverty and strengthen partnerships with, among others, organizations of the United Nations system. Both institutions participated fully in the three task forces, as they do in other inter-agency bodies for conference follow-up. There is also much collaboration at the country level, where the Bretton Woods institutions are involved in thematic groups (in a few cases in a lead position) and field-level committees and have consultations with the United Nations while supporting the Government in defining important policy frameworks (for instance on economic policies and their social dimensions). Overall, important progress is thus being made in bringing the United Nations, the agencies and the Bretton Woods

[31] The UNDAF exercise has been launched on a pilot basis in 19 countries, based on provisional guidelines. UNDAF is to serve as the common framework for development cooperation by funds and programmes at the country level. Specialized agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions are expected to join in the preparations and subsequent phases of UNDAF.

Box 1
Examples of national strategies recommended by conferences

- World Summit for Children: national programmes of action (NPAs) (over 150 countries)
- UNCED: national plans for the implementation of Agenda 21
- World Conference on Human Rights: national action plans identifying steps for the promotion of human rights[a]
- ICPD: national strategies and projects on population and development, as part of development planning
- WSSD: comprehensive cross-sectoral strategies for implementing the outcome of the Summit
- FWCW: national strategies or plans of action for implementing the Beijing Platform for Action (85 Member States)[b]
- Habitat II: national plans of action (127 countries) and/or other relevant national programmes and actions to achieve the goals of adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development; local plans of action
- World Food Summit: national plans, programmes and strategies should be reviewed and revised, as appropriate, with a view to achieving food security consistent with the Summit's commitments. This includes complementing existing national plans of action on nutrition developed as a follow-up to the International Conference on Nutrition (106 countries as of early 1997)

[a] The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, sect. II, para. 71: States are invited to consider the desirability of such plans.

[b] Beijing Platform for Action, para. 297. See also the synthesized report of the Secretary-General on national action plans and strategies for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (E/CN.6/1998/6).

institutions together to work in support of national action in the furtherance of internationally agreed objectives.[32]

54. CCPOQ and IACSD have recognized the important role that the World Bank and IMF are playing in conference follow-up processes. In particular, they have sought their cooperation and contribution within their mandates and areas of expertise in order to enhance the policy dialogue at the country level. Coherence and consistency between the United Nations system's follow-up of conference outcomes and the orientations agreed by the Government for country support from the Bretton Woods institutions could be pursued, through improved information exchange and greater connectivity between the country representatives of the Bretton Woods institutions and the resident coordinator system.

[32] The Economic and Social Council, in its agreed conclusions 1995/1 on coordinated follow-up to conferences, and the General Assembly in its resolution 50/227, annex, called for further enhancing the interaction between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions as an important ingredient in conference implementation. The Council, at its substantive session of 1998, will be provided with a review of the collaboration between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, including collaborating on the follow-up to conferences (E/1998/__).

2. Mainstreaming cross-cutting issues of conferences

55. Mainstreaming cross-cutting issues of conferences in the work of the United Nations system is essential for implementing global agendas. As noted above, ACC has paid particular attention to cross-cutting themes such as poverty eradication, gender mainstreaming and human rights, and under its guidance, the resident coordinator system has taken many initiatives to pursue these themes at the country level.

56. ACC, in October 1997, reaffirmed that the eradication of poverty remained a fundamental goal of the United Nations system that required its sustained and coordinated efforts. At its first regular session of 1998, ACC also provided guidance for inter-agency work to identify key areas for priority actions and the responsibilities of various organizations in those areas, with a view to promoting collaboration and synergies among them at the country level. In following up the Council's agreed conclusions of 1996, and under the guidance of ACC, CCPOQ, at its two previous sessions, examined ways to improve field-level collaboration for poverty eradication through a matrix of priority areas and agency responsibilities. The Executive Committee of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) has reached a consensus that the right to development should be a dimension for United Nations development activities, through UNDAF, in order to eradicate poverty.

57. Considerable efforts are also required and are being undertaken to mainstream, in particular, human rights and gender and to integrate environmental, population and children-related questions into the follow-up processes. Efforts for a coordinated follow-up to conferences have the potential to greatly contribute to the goal of gender equality. CCPOQ, based on proposals from the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (IACWGE) and the Turin workshop, has recommended a number of steps for mainstreaming gender in programme formulation, implementation and evaluation. In particular, CCPOQ has recommended that gender equality and women's empowerment strategies should be incorporated in the CSN and UNDAF processes, and that the common country assessment should include gender analysis in priority areas. It is also essential to strengthen the access of United Nations country teams to technical backstopping on gender and to build the capacity of United Nations system staff, Governments and civil society in gender-sensitive programming. While the convening of inter-agency thematic groups on gender should be supported, it was underscored that all thematic or working groups should incorporate gender issues in their work and consult with gender experts and/or focal points. Agencies represented in the United Nations country team should develop – and share – gender action plans related to the conference most relevant to their activities. Finally, there should be regular reviews on the extent to which gender impact and gender equality are an integral part of technical assistance activities and of programme evaluations. In a statement entitled "Gender equality and mainstreaming in the work of the United Nations system: a commitment for action", adopted by ACC at its first regular session of 1998, United Nations heads pledged to accelerate efforts to mainstream a gender perspective in all institutions, policies and programmes by implementing the specific recommendations on gender mainstreaming as elaborated in Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2.

58. The World Conference on Human Rights called for increased coordination of United Nations system activities in support of human rights and in assessing the impact of the United Nations system's policies and strategies on the promotion of human rights. Organizations are increasingly promoting human rights as an integral part of their activities.[33] These efforts to integrate human rights issues into United Nations system programmes and development activities need to be further strengthened, particularly in the preparation of CSN, UNDAF or other programming frameworks. The Council, at its 1998 coordination segment, will be provided with more detailed information on mainstreaming human rights in the activities of the United Nations system.[34]

3. Towards more coherent monitoring of conference implementation

59. Governments have the primary responsibility for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of conference outcomes. Such reporting is important in terms of monitoring progress, identifying problems and exchanging lessons learned. At the same time, the United

[33] UNICEF is promoting and integrating the Convention on the Rights of the Child in all the organization's policies; UNDP prepared a manual for mainstreaming human rights at the country level ("Human rights and sustainable human development"); UNDG is promoting a rights-based approach to development; and the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (UNAIDS) will establish an inter-agency reference group on HIV, human rights, ethics and law.

[34] Report of the Secretary-General on the coordinated follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (E/1998/__), to be issued.

Nations system has an important role to play in support of these national efforts.

More integrated requests for reports on conference implementation

60. To facilitate the reporting requirements, the United Nations system has made efforts to coordinate and streamline requests for national reports in order to avoid multiple requests, as called for by the Council in 1995[35] (see table 4). In this respect, CCPOQ has recommended that United Nations organizations participate in the IACSD-led exercise on streamlining requests for national reporting in the broad area of sustainable development and that they share information provided through national reports. Furthermore, United Nations country teams, upon request, support national reporting, with a view to, *inter alia*, avoiding duplicative reporting and to ensuring that reports reflect not only actions but also their impact.

61. The resident coordinators are responsible for providing periodic feedback on United Nations system activities in support of the implementation of conferences at the country level through their annual reports and other established reporting systems. Their reporting is an important means of disseminating information on actions at the country level and assists in assessing progress, sharing best practices and identifying obstacles, as well as in assessing the use of the outputs of the task forces and other relevant guidelines.

Statistics and indicators

62. All three task forces addressed the critical need for relevant indicators to monitor the implementation of conferences. They pointed to the importance of a coherent set of basic indicators and to the need to strengthen both United Nations and country capacity to collect and analyse statistics so that progress in implementing conference goals can be monitored and programme impact assessed. While monitoring progress in conference implementation is the responsibility of Governments, the United Nations system has an important role, in many countries, in helping to build national capacities for data collection and analysis.[36] Close collaboration with national authorities on key indicators used in programming and monitoring is also essential.

63. Ensuring greater complementarity of data collection among the entities of the United Nations system continues to be a major concern of ACC. As a first step towards reconciling statistical databases, the Task Force on an Enabling Environment for Economic and Social Development requested the Statistics Division of the United Nations Secretariat to develop an inventory of indicators produced by the United Nations system. The Statistics Division agreed to produce one for its own indicators and to request the members of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities to cooperate with its efforts. CCPOQ supported the work of the Statistics Division and encouraged other agencies to consider expanding the inventory created by the Statistics Division in order to encompass the rest of the United Nations system and to take stock of the scope of indicators produced by United Nations system agencies with a view to their eventual rationalization.

64. The Minimum National Social Data Set (MNSDS), adopted in 1997 by the Statistical Commission, constitutes a first step in building a coherent set of indicators for monitoring progress in conference implementation at the country level (see box 2). The United Nations system will need to promote its use and adaptation to specific country situations.

65. Finally, a number of efforts are under way at the international level, notably in the context of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) strategy for development cooperation for the twenty-first century, to develop a core set of indicators for monitoring progress towards widely shared development goals, in particular goals agreed upon at recent global conferences.

4. Financing conference follow-up

66. The implementation of conferences requires considerable financial resources.[37] The conferences themselves, the General Assembly, the Council and many other international forums have repeatedly called for the

[35] See Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1995/1.

[36] The Economic and Social Council recommended in 1996 that this be done (see agreed conclusions 1996/1 on poverty).

[37] For example, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development estimated an average annual cost for implementation between 1993 and 2000 at over $600 billion, including $125 billion from the international community. The International Conference on Population and Development estimated that, in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, the implementation of integrated population and reproductive health programmes would cost $17 billion in 2000 and increase to $21.7 billion in 2015. Furthermore, achieving universal access to basic social services is estimated to require a minimum of $80 billion more from both Governments and donors than the current level of spending on such services, which is estimated to be about $150 billion per year from all sources.

Table 4
Regular national reporting on selected cross-cutting themes of conferences

Cross-cutting theme	*National reporting requested by*	*Contents*	*V/M[a]*
Poverty	Social Summit/General Assembly (resolutions 50/161 and 51/202)	National progress in the implementation of the outcome of the Summit	V
	General Assembly (resolution 51/178)	Formulation or strengthening of integrated poverty eradication strategies/policies and implementation	V
	Commission for Social Development	Progress in the implementation of chapter 3 of Agenda 21 on poverty	V
Population	Commission on Population and Development	Follow-up to ICPD through reports on various topics: • 1999: population growth, structure and distribution • 2000: quinquennial review	V
	Commission for Social Development	Progress in the implementation of chapter 5 of Agenda 21	V
Health	WHO	Progress in the implementation of the Health for All (HFA) strategy, evaluation of national HFA strategies	V
	Commission on Sustainable Development	Progress in the implementation of chapter 6 of Agenda 21	V
Human settlements	Commission for Social Development	Progress in the implementation of chapter 7 of Agenda 21	V
	Habitat II	National action plans submitted to Habitat II	V
Women	Commission on the Status of Women	Progress in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action: • 1998: submission of voluntary action plans • 2000: comprehensive review of the Beijing Platform for Action	V
	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women	Situation in the country under each article of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women Obstacles encountered and progress in adhering to the Convention	M
	Commission on Sustainable Development	Progress in the implementation of chapter 24 of Agenda 21	V
Children	Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	Situation in the country under each article of CRC; obstacles encountered in adhering to CRC	M
	General Assembly resolution 45/217	Review of the implementation of the World Summit for Children's goals in 2001	V

Source: Matrix presented to IACSD.

[a] Voluntary (V) or mandatory (M) reporting.

urgent mobilization of resources from all sources for implementation.

67. The conferences recognized that, in general, a major part of the resources required for implementation would have to come from a country's own public and private sectors. However, substantial new and additional funds for conference implementation would remain essential for developing countries. Furthermore, official development assistance (ODA) should be a main source of external funding for those countries, in particular, the least developed countries. The continuing decline in ODA is therefore of international concern. Indeed, after a decline of more than 15 per cent in real terms from 1992 to 1996, ODA fell to an all-time low of 0.25 per cent of the gross national product (GNP) of DAC members in 1996.[38] ODA to the least developed countries has fallen to 0.06 per cent of the GNP of DAC member countries, as against the target of 0.15 per cent. These trends need to be reversed and internationally agreed targets need to be met if conference goals are to be achieved.

68. With shrinking resources, increasing attention is paid to the distribution of aid.[39] In this respect, OECD/DAC estimated that one fourth of ODA goes to countries which, as a group are near to or have already achieved the OECD/DAC conference-inspired goals for 2015.[40] It would seem more appropriate that a greater share of ODA should go to the least developed and low-income countries which are further removed from conference goals.

69. Besides the importance of increasing ODA, implementation of the 20/20 initiative promoted at the World Social Summit should help to ensure that more resources are directed towards achieving the goal of universal access to basic social services through better allocation by both donors and recipients.[41] As a follow-up to the April 1996 meeting convened in Oslo by the Governments of the Netherlands and Norway to review the implementation of the 20/20 initiative, several country studies are being conducted by UNICEF and other organizations. The studies aim at providing the necessary information for agreeing on specific targets for increasing the allocation of resources for basic social services and improving the delivery of these services.[42] The experiences of donor countries in the implementation of the 20/20 initiative and the reporting system it requires are also being examined. A second intergovernmental conference on the initiative will take place in Viet Nam in October 1998.

70. In 1997, as part of the larger process of mobilizing additional resources for development cooperation, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly examined new and innovative ways of generating funds for the financing of global development priorities that have resulted from global conferences.[43]

B. Better support for coordinated follow-up to conferences at the regional level

71. Regional follow-up activities involve action at the country and regional levels. Developing a common vision among the countries of the same region facilitates the implementation of conferences at the national level, because it highlights common issues and policies, allows for cooperation and facilitates a more integrated approach to development, its enabling environment, and cross-cutting issues of conferences.

72. The regional commissions are well situated to translate the recommendations and decisions adopted at regional and global levels into the reality of each region. They have a mandated role in conference implementation and follow-up. Regional specificity, the level of resources and the mandate of each regional commission all determine the scope of the regional commissions' involvement in follow-up activities. The follow-up activities to the recent global conferences mainly consist of the following: (a) data collection and processing; (b) analysis and research; (c) awareness-raising and dissemination of information, for example through publications; (d) monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of globally and regionally agreed plans and

[38] *1997 Development Cooperation Report: Development Cooperation in a New Age* (Paris, OECD, 1997).

[39] See, for instance, the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Fostering an enabling environment for development: financial flows, including capital flows; investment; trade" (E/1997/67), paras. 39-45.

[40] *1997 Development Cooperation Report...*

[41] The 20/20 initiative, which calls on Governments and donors to allocate at least 20 per cent of public spending and ODA, respectively, to basic social services (basic health, including reproductive health, nutrition, water and sanitation, and basic education), is aimed at ensuring that sufficient resources are allocated to achieve the agreed social goals.

[42] Studies are planned, under way or complete in 13 countries in Latin America, 17 in Africa, 5 in the Middle East and North Africa, 7 in Asia with, since 1997, resources from a UNDP trust fund created by Norway for follow-up to 20/20 activities.

[43] Report of the Secretary-General on new and innovative ideas for generating funds for globally agreed commitments and priorities (A/52/203-E/1997/85).

Box 2
The 15 indicators contained in the Minimum National Social Data Set

1. Population estimates by sex, age and, where appropriate and feasible, ethnic group
2. Life expectancy at birth, by sex
3. Infant mortality, by sex
4. Child mortality, by sex
5. Maternal mortality
6. Contraceptive prevalence rate
7. Average number of years of schooling completed, by urban/rural, sex and, where possible, income class
8. Number of people per room, excluding kitchen and bathroom
9. Access to safe water
10. Access to sanitation
11. Monetary value of the basket of food needed for minimum nutritional requirement
12. GDP per capita
13. Household income per capita (level and distribution)
14. Unemployment rate, by sex
15. Employment /population ratio, by sex and, where appropriate, formal or informal sector

Conferences addressed: ICPD, WSSD, FWCW, the World Summit for Children and Habitat II.

strategies; (e) advisory services to member countries; (f) sponsoring regional ministerial conferences and holding inter-agency meetings in preparation of the ministerial conferences; (g) organizing national workshops, NGO workshops, regional seminars and expert group meetings.

73. Cooperation between regional commissions and other intergovernmental regional organizations has increased following the global conferences. For example, ECLAC and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) act as interim secretariats for efforts to accelerate the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted by the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. As another example of regional cooperation, UNAIDS and the European Commission are sponsoring a series of regional meetings in partnership with regional development bodies to support responses to HIV/AIDS.

74. A variety of measures need to be pursued to strengthen the role of the regional commissions in their task of assisting the Member States of their regions in conference implementation. First, to improve coordination within the United Nations system, the regional inter-agency coordination mechanisms could serve as forums for increased exchange of information and experience on programme activities. Regional commissions could also participate, where appropriate, in mechanisms such as the country strategy note and UNDAF. Experience has also shown that collaborative projects, in which the funding organizations of the system provide resources to the regional commissions to implement projects of a regional and/or

subregional nature as part of the follow-up to conferences, could be useful. Finally, the experience of UNAIDS, which established intercountry teams at the regional level to ensure that country staff have access to high quality technical advice, is worth replicating.

75. This brief review indicates that, while progress has been made at the regional level, there is considerable potential for expanding collaborative action, at the interregional level, among the regional commissions for promoting actions in support of coordinated follow-up. In part, this is because many of the policy recommendations of the conferences are seen mostly in national terms, only occasionally in subregional and regional terms and hardly ever from an interregional perspective. However, some of the activities being explored by ECA, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and ECE for the Mediterranean region, mostly in the field of the environment, could offer important lessons on what can be achieved in an interregional context for application in other areas of concern to the global conferences.

Recommendations:

(i) The Council could call upon organizations of the United Nations system to build on the progress made thus far by fully utilizing the national level mechanisms and frameworks which are in place or are currently being elaborated, including CSN and UNDAF, to support the development of national strategies and action plans, based on national priorities, for integrated follow-up of conferences. During the triennial policy review of operational activities, the Council could request that the next revision of the guidelines for CSN preparations ensure that follow-up to conferences be included as a key factor in future United Nations system programming. Similarly, UNDAF's preparations would start with a broad situation analysis and ensure that the goals of coordinated conference follow-up are fully taken into account in country-level strategies and programmes. The Council could also invite the participation, where appropriate, of regional commissions in UNDAF and CSNs.

(ii) The resident coordinator system is responsible for coordinated support for follow-up to conferences by the United Nations system in countries. In considering measures to strengthen the resident coordinator system in the context of the triennial policy review, the Council may wish to take into account this role in the integration of the conference follow-up dimension into the functioning of the resident coordinator system.[44] The resident coordinator system, under the Government's guidance, could facilitate the interaction between the Government and civil society in the follow-up to conferences, including through assistance in capacity-building.

(iii) To support and encourage ongoing efforts, the Council could invite the organizations of the United Nations system to give wide dissemination to and make full use of the outputs of task forces, and bring them to the attention of their intergovernmental bodies for appropriate follow-up actions. The Council could invite the United Nations Staff College, through its training programmes and workshops, to contribute to advancing global conference goals, developing proper use of programming tools in their coordinated follow-up, and reinforcing best practices for their implementation.

(iv) The Council could encourage the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions to pursue ongoing efforts to enhance their cooperation in the follow-up to conferences. At the country level, greater coherence could be promoted between the United Nations system's follow-up of conferences and the activities of the Bretton Woods institutions in this area, as agreed with the Government, through improved information exchange and greater connectivity between the country representatives of the Bretton Woods institutions and the resident coordinator system.

(v) The Council could encourage and welcome efforts of regional organizations[45] to mobilize support for conference goals. In this context, the Council may take note of the OECD/DAC strategy for development cooperation for the twenty-first century, which is designed to contribute to pursuing and monitoring widely accepted goals, including conferences goals, through joint efforts of donor countries. It could ask to be kept informed of progress in the implementation of the strategy.

[44] See the report of the Secretary-General on the triennial policy review (E/1998/__), to be issued.

[45] For example, OECD/DAC, the Organization of American States, the Organization of African Unity, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Association of South-East Asian Nations and regional development banks.

(vi) The Council could call for continued efforts to enhance cooperation between the United Nations system and regional organizations, including regional development banks, as well as between the United Nations system and donors at the country level, through broad participation in thematic groups.

(vii) The Council could express support for ACC's efforts, through IACSD, to complete the exercise under way for streamlining requests for national reporting in the broad area of sustainable development and to share information among organizations provided through national reports and make it available electronically.

(viii) The Council could support the development of modalities for coordinated and integrated reporting to be widely used within the United Nations system to meet a variety of reporting requirements.

(ix) The Council could encourage the United Nations system to enhance its efforts to build national capacity for data collection and analysis. All organizations of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, should cooperate in promoting the use of the Minimum National Social Data Set.

(x) The Council could reiterate the importance of mobilizing additional resources from all sources for implementing conferences as well as of achieving the agreed ODA targets. It could encourage further progress in implementing the 20/20 initiative.

IV. Follow-up to the task forces by existing inter-agency bodies

A. Putting the ACC machinery for coordinated follow-up to conferences to full use

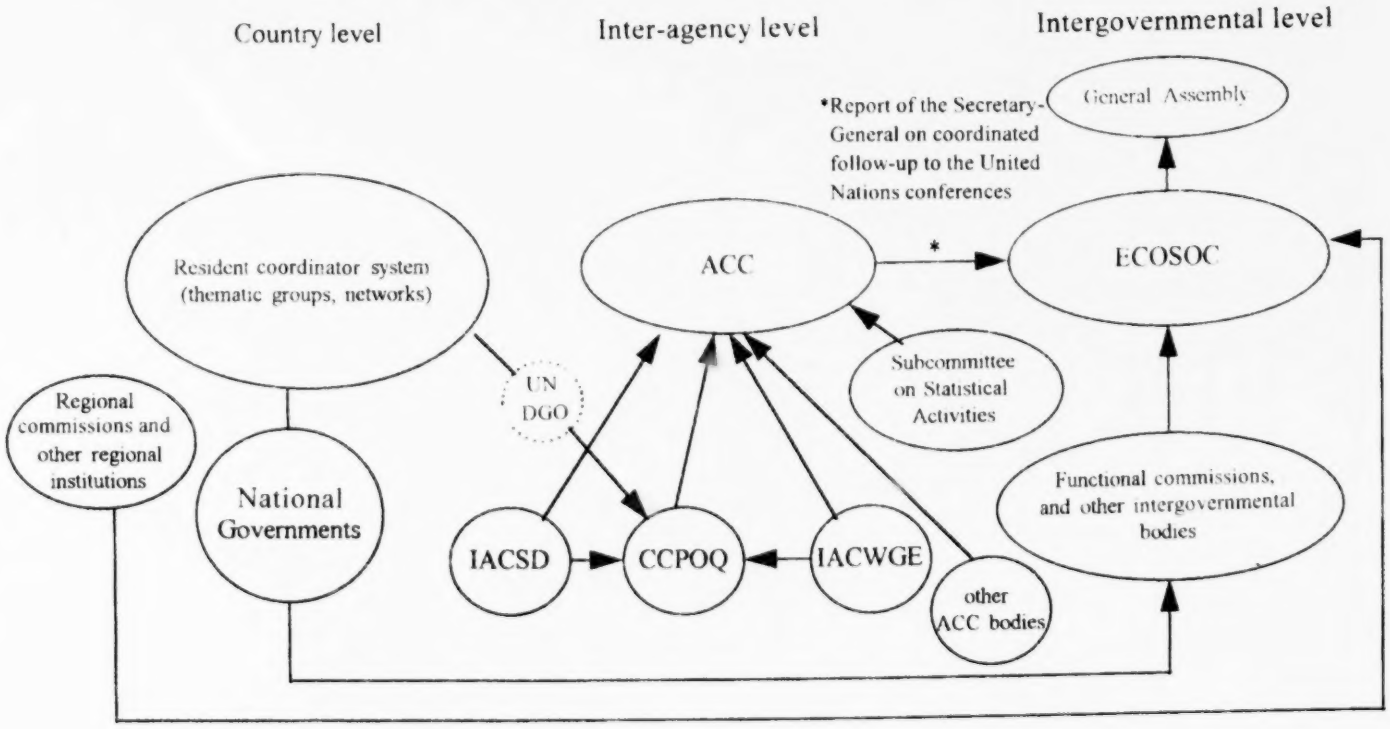
76. With the completion of the work of the task forces, the primary responsibility for inter-agency coordinated follow-up to conferences at Headquarters rests with ACC and its standing bodies. In this respect, ACC has provided guidance on the responsibilities of its standing committees, including guidance on interaction with intergovernmental bodies (see the figure). CCPOQ has the principal role in facilitating the coordinated approach to conference follow-up at the country, regional and global levels. At the same time, CCPOQ, IACSD and the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality have been asked to expand and strengthen the dialogue among them, given the importance of sustainable development and gender mainstreaming in advancing conference objectives. The ACC Subcommittee on Statistics also has the important role of providing support in relation to data and indicators and of pursuing the recommendations addressed to it on the follow-up to conferences and has been asked to report to CCPOQ on its findings and conclusions.[46]

77. The United Nations Development Group Office (UNDGO) will be the focal point for collecting information through the resident coordinator system on United Nations system activities in the implementation of conference goals at the country level. It will provide information to ACC, CCPOQ and other ACC committees on such activities, including use of the outputs of the task forces, as well as lessons learned and best practices. Apart from its own interaction with the Council, ACC has encouraged its standing bodies also to interact with the Council and its subsidiary bodies, for example by means of panels, the use of which should continue.

78. At the regional level, meetings of regional representatives of the United Nations system are convened regularly by the executive secretaries of the regional commission. These meetings provide a major mechanism for inter-agency coordination. The agendas of the meetings include items on global conferences, with a view to coordinating follow-up action for their implementation. Specific meetings and groups focusing on one or another of the global conferences have also been organized (see box 3).

[46] It may be noted that the General Assembly, in its resolution 50/225, recognized the importance of major United Nations conferences and urged the development of the necessary capabilities to enable public administration to implement the commitments agreed upon in an effective and coordinated manner. The United Nations system agreed to include the relevant aspects of the outcome of the Assembly's consideration at its resumed fiftieth session of the question of public administration and development in the work programme of the Sub-group on Capacity-building for Governance of the Task Force on an Enabling Environment for Economic and Social Development. The primary responsibility for inter-agency coordination of the follow-up to the resumed session will be carried out by ACC and its standing bodies, particularly CCPOQ.

Reporting on the coordinated follow-up to United Nations global conferences



Box 3

Inter-agency meetings organized by the regional commissions on the follow-up to conferences

- ECE 1996 inter-agency consultative meeting on the follow-up to Beijing (helped to recapitulate the regional activities of the United Nations system and to identify ongoing and future areas for cooperation)
- The Inter-Organizational Subcommittee on Population and Development in Asia and the Pacific (aims at promoting a coherent strategy on population and development and at strengthening regional cooperation)
- The Regional Inter-agency Committee for Asia and the Pacific (RICAP) Inter-Agency Subcommittee on the Advancement of Women (develops collaborative activities based on the Jakarta Plan of Action, the Beijing Platform for Action and the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women; its deliberations are forwarded to IACWGE); and the RICAP Subcommittee on HIV/AIDS (for cooperation between the United Nations system and other organizations)
- ECLAC's fifth meeting of the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system on approaches to and obstacles in the follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action (November 1997)
- ESCWA's Regional Inter-agency Coordination Group (RICG) (for information-sharing among agencies, and for providing integrated support to the Ministerial Meeting organized by the League of Arab States on follow-up to Beijing)

B. Using task manager/lead agency and networking arrangements for follow-up to conferences

79. In assessing the work of the task forces, ACC found that their methods of work, including the lead agency arrangements, had proved successful and had provided valuable guidance for future system-wide efforts. It recommended that collaboration among organizations of the system on cross-cutting themes of conferences be maintained through a network approach using task managers. Under the overall guidance of CCPOQ, IACSD and IACWGE, networking arrangements led by task managers will, in particular, provide policy advice and programme assistance in the follow-up to conferences at the country level, on specific issues among relevant agencies, not necessarily the same in every case.[47] Linkages between such networking arrangements and the World Bank's sectoral networks, such as the Human Development Network, will be developed further.

80. A good example of such networking arrangements is the recently created ACC Network on Rural Development and Food Security, designated by ACC as the inter-agency mechanism for the follow-up to the World Food Summit. Thematic groups covering food security and related issues at the country level[48] are backstopped by a headquarters-level network of 20 ACC organizations operated by FAO in cooperation with WFP and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, which also handles an evaluation and monitoring component. The network reports to ACC, through CCPOQ or IACSD, as appropriate, and will make its outputs available to other mechanisms within and outside

[47] The task managers will be responsible for maintaining electronic databases and for disseminating information on experiences, best practices and joint action (see guidance note to the resident coordinator system).

[48] FAO indicates that, in 73 countries, inter-agency thematic groups (or task forces) addressing rural development and food security are already operating or are in the process of being established within the resident coordinator system.

Box 4
A few lessons learned on task manager/lead agency arrangements

Overall, experience suggests that the task forces and task manager/lead agency modality can be effective, especially for limited time-spans. It engenders co-ownership through increased sharing of responsibilities and closer collaboration as well as more effective use of expertise and resources within the United Nations system, without creating another layer of bureaucracy. Task force systems can also further outreach beyond the United Nations system, with a view to involving other relevant intergovernmental organizations and partners from civil society.

Experience also suggests that, for maximum effectiveness, a task force should have a well-defined programme of work, be focused on a specific task or issue and encompass normative and operational aspects, as required. Clear objectives and time-frames are also important. The use of informal networks and working methods – in addition to more established formal inter-agency mechanisms, also proved effective. It also seems that networks or task forces are more effective if they involve a limited number of agencies with complementary interests. They should be sensitive to the different perspectives of their members, be linked to their mandates and governance structures, and use organizations' comparative advantages in tackling a particular set of issues. Lead agencies and focal points should be chosen based on their competence, ability and track record in delivering results.

There are also possible limitations to the task force/task manager approach. A lead agency may be difficult to identify in certain fields. The effort can be rather time-consuming and financially burdensome for lead agencies. Finally, it is often difficult to maintain the momentum for cooperation over a long time-span.

the ACC machinery.[49] It will also share information with non-United Nations actors.

81. Thus far, the experience with the three ad hoc task forces and with other lead agency arrangements confirms that the task force/lead agency arrangements can be usefully applied for certain cross-cutting issues emanating from conferences (see box 4). They should be used primarily in areas which require a fresh look at coordination and where significant and additional value can be derived from expending scarce resources to enhance coordination.

Recommendations:

(i) The Council could request that, with the completion of the work of the task forces, the coordinated follow-up to conferences be ensured by ACC and its subsidiary machinery and that collaboration among organizations of the system on certain cross-cutting themes of conferences be maintained through a network approach using task managers and information technology. It could request to be kept informed about the progress made within the system on the use of issue-based management systems for inter-agency coordination.

(ii) The Council could welcome ACC's efforts to ensure a clear sharing of tasks and continued dialogue within its subsidiary machinery on the follow-up to conferences, including CCPOQ, IACSD, IACWGE and the Subcommittee on Statistics.

(iii) The Council could call for continued and improved interaction between inter-agency mechanisms and networks for follow-up to conferences, on the one hand, and the Council and its functional and regional commissions, on the other.

[49] As to the ACC Subcommittee on Nutrition (SCN), it is charged with coordinating international activities to improve nutrition, including follow-up to the goals of the International Conference on Nutrition. It comprises representatives of all concerned United Nations agencies and observers for bilateral agencies as well as for developing countries.

(iv) In view of the important role of the intergovernmental bodies of the organizations of the United Nations system in integrating conference goals in the work programmes of the organizations, the Council could reiterate the recommendation to these bodies to take into account its recommendations and those of ACC to ensure a coordinated approach to conference follow-up throughout the system.